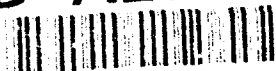


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**ARMY TURBULENCE AND  
STRATEGIC READINESS, 1992**

BY

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL G. T. JONES II**  
United States Army

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ARMY TURBULENCE AND STRATEGIC READINESS, 1992

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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# ABSTRACT

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Army turbulence of 1992 consisted of almost 300,000 soldiers moving on orders and another 86,000 departing active duty. The movement of this magnitude and the importance of retaining strategic readiness concerned all leaders. Leaders feared a return of the hollowness of the '70's. PERSCOM managed the distribution of the Army soldiers in a successful manner; the majority of soldiers were in the right position to assure readiness. Individual skills are well trained and honed to a fine edge. Collective skills were degraded due to the turbulence, but are recovering quickly. The strategic readiness of the Army was sustained; today, it is a trained and ready force.

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Army turbulence in 1992--involving about fifty percent of the active force--affected strategic readiness. Or did it? Inductive logic suggests that strategic readiness would suffer with all the permanent changes of station (PCS) and build-down operations. Every soldier on active duty experienced aspects of the moving, and feared a readiness decline and the onset of hollowness. Turbulence affects the strategic force through degrading the cohesiveness of units, the state of training, and the maintenance of equipment. Yet this hollowness has not happened: Today's Army is a trained and ready force. How is it possible that, with such disruption, the Army has not suffered a strategic readiness problem? What lessons does this experience hold for the future? This paper will explore these questions. First, it will discuss the strategic value of the Army, then look at the turbulence of 1992, the actions of the personnel system to distribute soldiers, the impact on training of the turbulence, and what the future might hold. Turbulence has become a persistent condition for the Army, but the Army has learned to adapt in ways that will preserve readiness, almost regardless of the size or pace of future changes.

#### STRATEGIC VALUE

The Army's mission is to defend the nation. For the last forty-plus years only one major threat existed, allowing a focus for the development of doctrine, force structure, and equipment. The collapse of the U.S.S.R. and reduction of that threat has now put the Army, as well as the nation and the world in a transformation period, leaving the familiar for the unknown. The

Army's vision as described by former Secretary of the Army Michael P. W. Stone, and the Chief of Staff, Army, General Gordon Sullivan is:

#### AMERICA'S ARMY

A Total Force, Trained and Ready to fight...

Serving the Nation at Home and Abroad...

A Strategic Force

Capable of Decisive Victory.

The vision acknowledges the Army as a strategic force, an image one does not often associate with soldiers. Soldiers are in the mud, the trenches, fighting from tanks, parachuting from the sky. Soldiers are often not aware the objectives they win are strategic. The Army as a body achieves strategic objectives and is thus a strategic force. The Army's value as a strategic force has been and is important to the defense of the nation and its vital interests.

There are three key elements to the Army's strategic value: its power, its training and readiness, and its commitment. These elements enable the Army to conduct successful operations, and to achieve strategic objectives and decisive victory. It is the condition (readiness) of elements combined with the state of global relationships that permits the U.S. to be the world's leader.

The first element is power. Today the U.S. Army is

technologically superior to all other land-combat forces. This technical power, coupled with the large numbers of systems and organizations available, allow one to quantify combat power. Having derived a value for U.S. forces and similar value for an opposing force, one can project a ratio of combat power. Measured by such methods the Army continues to have more technical power than other nations. Russia has an immense number of sophisticated systems, but lacks the training, and the command and control synergism of the U.S. The U.S. is the one power capable of using its military power to achieve strategic goals.

Part of this technical power is the industrial capability of the U.S. to produce technology. The factories and assembly lines of the nation construct the best equipment in the world. The research and development ability of industry and the scientific community continually improves technology. This continuing improvement melded with the changing combat environment will enable the U. S. Army to remain the foremost military power in the world.

The second element, training and readiness, is the ability to use military technology to achieve the nations objectives. Soldiers throughout the Army apply themselves daily to tasks involving training or maintaining the multitude of equipment and systems within the Army.

Training is complex and ranges from individual skills to large collective ones. Training is all-inclusive, covering everyone from the infantry man in the squad in the field to the

medical doctor in an operating room at Walter Reed Medical Center. There are many diverse skills and tasks in all the systems that make up the Army. Training soldiers begins as they first enter the Army and continues till release or retirement. Training consumes the Army; everything accomplished focuses back on a training issue. The purpose of all the training is to engage enemies on the battlefield and win a decisive victory.

Readiness--the other subelement--is the condition of the technology, equipment, and the soldiers to accomplish the nation's objectives and interests. To fight and win on the battlefield, all the systems must be ready and operating effectively.

The Army uses an objective method to rate readiness, set out in AR 220-1, Unit Status Reporting. Rating areas include personnel, equipment, training, and funds. Unit commanders report their unit status up the chain of command; thus, the leadership of the Army knows the readiness of the force. This method assesses how ready units and systems are to accomplish assigned missions.

The last element of the strategic value is commitment. The arrival of Army troops connotes the significance of the interest and the U.S. intent in a situation. The deployment of the Air Force and Naval units sends a message to aggressors regarding the interests of the nation; however, the insertion of the Army underscores the nations will. The message is clear: The U.S. is serious and intends to gain a decisive victory.



### TURBULENCE

"The Army released 85,000 soldiers from active duty between February and September 1992."<sup>1</sup> Almost another 300,000 soldiers and their families moved on orders during 1992--40 per cent of the force. The genesis of this paper came about in the fall of 1992. The totality of the numbers and the turbulence of 1992 were coming to light. Hollowness seemed to be on many leaders minds, and memories of the hollow Army of the 1970's prevailed. In fact the following anecdotes propelled this research.

The first case was a Retention Control Point (RCP) story. Army regulations have long tied the number of years of service to the grade structure. This policy seeks to keep the force young and upwardly mobile; it created a pattern commonly referred to as the up-or-out syndrome. During the Cold War, the size of the force allowed active soldiers to average a higher number of years in service, with careers of 24 years and longer commonplace. The RCP policy announced in 1992 changed the years-in-grade limits significantly. The force perceived announcement of these changes and execution time of the changed policy to be the same. A by product was critical temporary shortages in some units.

For example a battalion commander whose organization had a specialized mission got caught short because of the dynamic change in RCP. Recruitment and specialized training of his soldiers required two years, at the same time the sensitivity of his mission called for seasoned soldiers and mature judgement.

The RCP limit of 24 years for a master sergeant (MSG) reduced the unit's deployable assets by 18 percent. One MSG was at 24 years; two others were so close to 24 years that they could not be deployed. This situation caused major problems for the unit. To meet mission requirements, other soldiers were shifted in duty assignments. This shift shorted time at home station between temporary duty while a change in the recruitment phase resulted in selection of less experienced non-commissioned officers (NCO's). But this was not the whole story. The entire unit perceived the effect of RCP, as "a hard dose of arbitrary reality therapy, and...a concrete result of downsizing pressure."<sup>2</sup>

Another example demonstrates the complexity of personnel policies. The Voluntary Separation Incentive (VSI) and Special Separation Benefit (SSB), two of the downsizing initiatives, begin with a request from the individual soldier. The requests are then approved by the first commander in the chain of command who is at the grade of colonel. These programs were very popular in the field, because their impact was quick and because the unit got on with business. However, because the unit knew there would be underlap, the local problem could be managed for the short term.

This management would not work above the local level. For example, the branch Chief for aviation enlisted soldiers told about an imbalance developing for mechanics for the Apache Helicopter. More Apache mechanics requested and received

approval to leave the Army than the plan projected. Because Aviation Branch had no voice in the release procedure, a shortage of Apache mechanics forced a decision on how to resource all the valid positions: Would every unit needing the mechanics be equally short? To some extent the answer depends on how the managers thought shortages would affect readiness. Should PERSCOM assign more mechanics to specified priority units and accept the degraded performance in the rest? Could there be other solutions? In this case, great staff work among the Aviation School, TRADOC, and PERSCOM resulted in contracting the training for new mechanics. The remaining mechanics in the inventory were assigned to operational units, so readiness was not degraded for the contingency force units. The result of this experience was a change in policy: Approval authority now rests with PERSCOM to avoid future inventory imbalances.<sup>4</sup>

RCP once again came into play. Some remaining mechanics had less than 36 months to their RCP date--the date of mandatory retirement. Stabilization policy with the RCP prevents the reassignment of any soldier within the 36 months of retirement or release. Even so, a mechanic who returns from an overseas base through normal rotation could be sent back overseas after 12 months on station under existing eligibility rules. Such turbulence hampers readiness and causes soldiers to wonder about the equality of the system.

Such anecdotal evidence enhances the perception of problems and strongly suggests the Army is becoming hollow. Told in many

variations and with different locales, after constant repetition--a rumor becomes accepted as fact. The story goes something like this: A former battalion commander called back to his old unit about some unfinished business. In the conversation he discovered how many soldiers had moved, been caught by RCP, sent to school, etc. Reviewing the unit's current status, he learns three of the five First Sergeants are staff sergeant promotables. All of these soldiers are great guys, but they lack the experience to be the top soldier in a unit. In practice, therefore, hollowness has arrived almost overnight.

#### PERSONNEL

The dynamic downsizing of 1992 stressed The Personnel Command (PERSCOM), managing over 86,000 soldiers discharged and about 300,000 moving in turbulence, an Army in Motion<sup>5</sup>. Before the build down, PERSCOM managed three distinct dimensions: accessions, training, and distribution. The drawdown has added five more dimensions to personnel management: Conventional Forces Europe (CFE); EC3--European units moving in accordance with an Army restructuring plan; Base Realignment and Closures (BRAC); CONUS Unit Moves; and downsizing programs Volunteer Early Transition (VET); Voluntary Separation Incentives/Special Separation Benefit (VSI/SSB); Selective Early Retirement Boards (SERB); and Retention Control Point (RCP). A complex number of programs requiring coordination, focus, and precise management to achieve standard--a trained and ready force. All was not smooth in 1992, and many lessons were learned. As the Army Times

stated, "unexpected speed of the drawdown has created some readiness problems for the Army, as unit deactivation and forced structure changes have not kept pace with separations. That means units have fewer soldiers than authorized."<sup>6</sup>

PERSCOM managed these diverse programs without achieving total success, but the Army is still a capable force. Some units do have shortages. The descriptions of the dimensions below highlight the problems with personnel management.

To meet the personnel goal of a strategic Army throughout this decade and into the next century, a specific number of recruits must enter the Army. The Army is a dynamic organization requiring new soldiers to mature into experienced soldiers; meanwhile, experienced soldiers must leave to assure continuing vitality. PERSCOM used the base force number--an end strength of 535,000 soldiers--to determine the sustaining recruitment objective. The Army Recruiting Command achieved this objective with the quality soldier needed for the technologically sophisticated Army. The system saw little procedural change.

The training system did change. The noncommissioned officers and officers who staff the schools and the training base were also affected by the drawdown dimensions. Downsizing affected the training base instructors and staff by causing departures. Replacements for these soldiers had to found and reassigned to the training base without seriously degrading the ongoing training of soldiers. PERSCOM managed the adjustment of the numbers supporting the training--in most cases successfully.

Distribution of soldiers--the balancing of the resources to the requirements and priorities of the Army--is the difficult part of PERSCOM's function. The five additional dimensions affected the distribution function. Early on some of the programs were outside of PERSCOM's authority--a situation that increased the difficulty.

One of the new dimensions, the Conventional Forces, Europe (CFE) is tied to the treaty required reduction of forces in Europe. However, with the fall of the Warsaw Pact, reduced threat, and budget reductions--Europe requires less force structure. The U.S. Congressional mandate to reduce American Forces to 100,000 currently defines the evolving structure for Europe. The displaced soldiers must either return to the U.S. or leave the Army.

The restructuring of the Army also involves the movement of units to new stations. The units from Europe, designated as EC3 units, move to the U.S. Some units move as a result of BRAC. Other units are moving to align the force structure. A total of 459 unit moves will occur by the end of 1995. Turbulence, the Army in Motion--PERSCOM is managing it all carefully.

The last system, downsizing, was the most difficult to integrate into the management of personnel. As these programs spun up in 1992, the VET and VSI/SSB approval authority resided with the first colonel in the chain-of-command. PERSCOM did not know how many soldiers volunteered for early transition or planned to leave until the reports made it through Personnel

channels. That point was often too late to allow proactive assignment actions. This uncertainty and delay added to the difficulty of placing the soldier in the right job at the right time. The Selective Early Retirement Board (SERB) because of the small size and audience, did not present as great a challenge as the other programs. The RCP program as explained above did cause difficulties at the unit level.

### TRAINING

Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) is responsible to train the total Army force and to develop doctrine. TRADOC consists of all the schools, trains all incoming soldiers, runs professional development courses throughout the soldier's tenure in the Army. Doctrine evolves from the studies conducted at the schools and from the vision of the Army leadership.

Training as described above must be demonstrated; the nation and the world must see the Army's power. The Combat Training Centers (CTCs); National Training Center (NTC) at Ft. Irwin, California; Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Ft. Chaffee, Arkansas; and Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTTC) at Hohenfelds, Germany, provide the demonstration. All combat maneuver units rotate to a training center within a two year window to train on the collective tactics, techniques, and procedures. This cycle allows units to train under the most realistic conditions possible short of combat, overseen by dedicated observer/controllers (O/C). The After Action Review (AAR) process enables the unit leadership to see and relive the

battle to discover weaknesses, and strengths. The AARs guided by the O/C's discuss ways to improve the unit's effectiveness for the next battle. Additionally the unit takes home copies of the AARs to assist in developing home-station training. This training is hands-on. Training at the CTC's descriptively displays the Army's capability (power).

The Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) is the next echelon of training and uses simulation to train brigades divisions, and corps commanders and their staffs. BCTP follows the methodology of dedicated O/Cs to discuss the operations and ways to improve performance.

These are a few of the ways training is demonstrated; and, coupled with the media coverage of these events, the story of Army power is told. The training on the technology with doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures results in the power.

Training is subjective. How much is enough? Leaders are always striving to improve the performance of themselves, their units, and the Army. Army regulations, Army pamphlets, field manuals, technical manuals, soldiers manuals, Army Readiness and Training Evaluation Programs (ARTEP), standard operating procedures (SOP), and numerous other documents describe standards for individuals and units (collective tasks). Every leader seeks methods to enhance the effectiveness and improve on the power of the unit. The drive for training throughout the Army in the 1980's established a strong base of individual- and collective-



skill proficiency at all levels.

The Army also reinforced individual training through the school system and now ties promotion with achievement in the school system. At all levels the Army has schools to increase the skill of the soldier--from Basic Non-commissioned Officers Course (BNCOC), through the Command and General Staff Officers Course, to a Capstone course for General Officers. The schools train specific skills by function, and general leadership and training skills. Schools also teach required subjects in Equal Opportunity, law of land warfare. The individual soldier thus becomes well trained and ready to perform his skills.

Training collective skills is tougher. The synergism of individuals requires training--often repetitiously--to achieve efficiency and effectiveness. The more a unit trains together, the better it becomes. Trust is built up, and everyone comes to anticipate actions and work together to achieve a better result. To get to a high level of proficiency the unit needs to train together for a period and suffer some stress. Studies on COHORT (Cohesion, Operational Readiness and Training Program) by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research discussed the factor of trust and vertical/horizontal cohesion. The higher the trust built on training the better the units performed.<sup>7</sup> Collective skills just need practice and time to mature.

Perceptions about the effects of turbulence on readiness differ among senior officers and staff members. MG William Boice, who commands the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division, thought that

turbulence could cause a readiness problem, but his subordinate commanders report their units are ready. MG Boice observed that the fourteen days training included in the highest readiness rating is important to build cohesive collective skills. He sees that the individual skills are well trained, and the results from the CMTC indicate the collective skills are improving.<sup>9</sup> MG Boice is not alone in his concerns. Colonel George Harmeyer, commanding the Operations Group at the NTC underscored the readiness issue. Units rotating to the NTC for training are fairly well-manned and are not hollow. COL Harmeyer and his observer/controllers see good quality across the board, and see good knowledge among the NCO's and Officers.<sup>9</sup> According to COL Harmeyer, the drawdown policies assured that good quality soldiers remained. The soldiers are proven and interested in improving performance; thus they have the same goal as their leaders. Still, a unit's first battles at the NTC involve steep learning curves because staffs and units are still forming into combat teams. The turbulence of 1992 produced new staffs in most units. During 1993 units will be building the trust and experience base the Army force enjoyed before going into Desert Storm. The team work is developing through practice and training--the key points of the COHORT study found.<sup>10</sup>

COL Harmeyer believes three factors negatively affect training. One is the turbulence of the Army. Another is the budget reduction: Less money translates into less opportunity to train at task force and brigade levels. So training seems

focused at the platoon and company level. Lastly, the Bold Shift initiatives appear to take leadership away from the unit for long periods of time. This last factor degrades the cohesion of the unit and its operations. Units must train together to achieve synergism."<sup>11</sup>

Units have enough soldiers assigned to accomplish their missions, though some are not at ALO strength. Training over time will bring the cohesion level up and the creditable power of the unit.

The standard is a trained and ready Army. The underpinning fact to obtain this standard is having soldiers in the units and the units at authorized strength. PERSCOM manages the distribution function and has assigned soldiers to the right place. Shortages have developed in some units, because force reduction failed to keep up with the number of soldiers departing the Army. Even with these shortages, units have continued training, building cohesion and synergism and obtaining the standards. General David M. Maddox, Commander of U. S. Army, Europe and Seventh Army, reported "70% of USAREUR soldiers moved in 1992 and gunnery scores at Grafenwoehr went up."<sup>12</sup> Units are well trained. Tank crews are scoring higher. Task forces at the CTCs are improving. In short, the Army can do its mission. The well trained individual soldier is the key to maintaining strategic readiness, as Colonel Harmeyer pointed out: the best soldiers have stayed in the Army.

### THE FUTURE

The challenge to the Army is to maintain its readiness. The Army is now a strategic force and to be credible it must sustain its readiness. The turbulence in 1992 affected the Army in cohesion, but training is daily overcoming this weakness. Units are going to the CTC'S and regaining the edge the Army had going into Operation Desert Storm.

Drawdown will continue. The current plan for the Army assumes 35,000 soldiers departing the service each year while units sustain readiness. meanwhile, President Clinton's goal to reduce the military active force by an additional 200,000 will increase personnel losses and reduce force structure. The Army stands to feel direct effects.

In February, Secretary of Defense Aspin stated, "The Army is rethinking its timetable...For budget reasons they (the Army) might want to accelerate the pace (of withdrawal from Europe) a little bit."<sup>12</sup> The same day, Secretary Aspin issued orders to cut \$11 Billion from the Defense Department for 1994 in 'the first step toward moving to a smaller and effective force' of 1.4 million members. He instructed the services to "cut operating and training expenses as much as possible through more effective use of simulation and other proven techniques."<sup>13</sup>

While the Army's continued build down, will be less dynamic than 1992, the rate clearly will be more than the planned 35,000 soldiers a year. Units stationed overseas will likely be the bill payers. Even so the Army will not return to the hollowness

of the 1970's: Units will have soldiers assigned to accomplish their missions. PERSCOM knows how to manage the force, and the leadership is making decisions to assure the Army, whatever the size, is trained and ready.



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